

Europe. The question of making coke is attracting the attention of coal proprietors in New South Wales, and the Government of that colony have received a report from its Geologist in regard to this which affords a great deal of valuable information on the subject, and I would refer honourable members to this report, which is embodied in the report of the Inspecting Engineer. The fine dust is really the best of the coal, and, with proper care in manufacturing it into coke, would have a ready market in the Australian Colonies. A profitable industry would, accordingly, be opened up; and what is now considered by this company as valueless refuse would be thus converted into a marketable commodity which would give profitable returns for its manufacture.

COAL-MINERS.

The average number of men employed in connection with coal-mining last year was 1,681, as against 1,693 for the previous year, showing that there were twelve men less employed last year than for the former year. Taking the value of the labour in connection with raising the coal and loading in trucks, ready for transporting to either a port of shipment or a market, to be 6s. per ton, then the total value of the men's earnings would be £200,633 4s., which is equal to £119 7s. 1d. a man per annum; while the average earnings for the former year on the same basis was £118 10s. 2d., thus showing an increase last year to the extent of 16s. 11d. per man.

The average earnings of the miners are not large, but they will compare favourably with wages earned by those employed in agricultural pursuits.

METALLIFEROUS MINING.

Very little attention has hitherto been given to metalliferous ores, other than those containing gold and silver, although there is a large variety of minerals in the colony; but to work these economically expensive plants are required, in order to extract a fair percentage of the metals they contain. We have copper-ore in some parts of the colony that, even at its low market value, could be made to give profitable returns for working. During last year Mr. A. McKay, the Mining Geologist, discovered a wide belt of cupreous schist in the ranges up the Arahura River, from which samples were tested at the Colonial Laboratory which gave 10 per cent. of copper. There is a large lode containing copper-ore in the northern portion of the Auckland District which also gives a large percentage of copper; and deposits of copper-ore have been worked at Kawau, Great Barrier and D'Urville Islands; the Dun Mountain, Aniseed Valley, and Roding River, in the Provincial District of Nelson; Whakatipu, and Waitehuna, in the Provincial District of Otago. More recently, prospecting operations have been carried on at Maharahara, near Woodville; but none of the places where operations have heretofore been carried on have given sufficient returns to pay for the expense in getting the ore and forwarding it to Europe for treatment. There has been no attempt made to get a plant in the colony, with the exception of that erected by the Champion Company at the Roding River; and even that plant is of very little service, for the men they had in charge of it evidently did not understand the principle of extracting the copper from the ore, as that metal and the slag can yet be seen all mixed together. It is likely that some of the copper lodes will yet be taken up and made to give good returns by having a proper plant on the ground. There are many other ores also that will yet be worked and made remunerative investments. Scarcely anything has hitherto been done in metalliferous mining. The reason of this may be, to some extent, that the ores are generally found in mountainous regions, where there are neither roads nor tracks. The difficulties in the way of prospecting the lodes appear so great, and the expense in working them and forwarding the ore for miles through a very broken country to a port of shipment, deters people from expending any capital to open them up, as they would require to be exceptionally rich to pay for the expense of working under these circumstances.

Ores of cinnabar are also found in many parts of the colony—at Waipori, in the Otago District, and at Waiorongomai, Puhipuhi, and Ohaeawai, in the Auckland District. At the latter place a lode of this mineral has recently been found in the side of the range adjacent to the hot pools, where quicksilver in its metallic state is seen distributed in minute globules amongst a fine black sediment in the valley.

Scheelite is also greatly inquired after by firms in London and Liverpool, who state they are prepared to take 200 tons per annum. There should be no difficulty in supplying that quantity, as this mineral is widely distributed over the Otago District. The price quoted